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U.S. Negotiating To Free Hertz, Vietcong Captive

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GUSTAV C. HERTZ

... U.S. seeks his release

Critical Stage Reached In Talks on AID Official

By Richard Harwood

Washington Post Staff Writer

Secret negotiations are under way between the United States and the Vietcong for the release of a captive American government official, Gustav C. Hertz.

The negotiations, which have now reached a critical stage, have been conducted for months through a variety of channels. If an agreement is reached, it will end a 14-month ordeal for Hertz, a high-ranking Agency for International Development official from Leesburg, Va., and will climax one of the most fascinating and convoluted undercover negotiations of modern diplomacy.

The desperate, quiet effort to free him has involved since last summer the personal intervention of a U.S. Senator (Robert Kennedy), a fruitless ransom effort by the Central Intelligence Agency, the political fortunes of a North African nationalist leader, the intercession of private critics of American policy in Vietnam, and the stability of the Saigon government.

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Hertz has not been seen for months but the assumption is that he is alive and well.

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